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U.S. failure to use its own covert tools puzzles Europeans

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Winston Churchill — grandson of Britain's World War II prime minister — recalled his namesake yesterday while urging Congress to support the Nicaraguan resistance forces.

"Their message to the West," he said, "is in essence the same as the one which my grandfather, Winston Churchill, sent to President Roosevelt in the early years of the war, when Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany. . . . 'Give us the tools, and we will finish the job.'"

But a former senior French defense minister said in a separate interview with editors of The Washington Times that U.S. failure to use its own covert tools discreetly is "puzzling" to European observers.

Francois Heisbourg said discussion in the American press of supposedly covert actions in Nicaragua — such as publication of a CIA manual — indicates that this country "apparently doesn't know how to play" the game of secret operations.

The two views of the Reagan administration's Central American policy came as European scholars and political leaders added their opinions to Congressional debate over a \$14 million aid package for Nicaraguan resistance fighters.

Mr. Churchill and other members of Resistance International supported the aid package at a Capitol Hill seminar jointly sponsored by the American Foreign Policy Council.

Panel moderator Jeane Kirkpatrick, former U.N. ambassador, made no formal remarks but read a petition to Congress from the Paris-based human-rights, anti-communist resistance group.

"If you fail in Nicaragua, we must ask, where will you fail next?" the petition said.

"The Nicaraguan issue is particularly interesting because it is a reproduction of a pattern we know

quite well," said French author Jean-Francois Revel. "We have seen that pattern in Central Europe."

Mr. Revel said the Sandinista regime is on the same course revolutions in Eastern Europe followed after World War II.

After a "short moment of glory," he said, elections were announced. But "the police state is put into

action," and "when election day arrives, you have just one party."

Meanwhile, Mr. Heisbourg told editors of The Times that the United States also has "dropped the ball."

"What the French don't understand about this whole issue is that you talk about these things," he said, referring to widespread publication of a CIA manual for the resistance forces. "One does not deal with this sort of activity . . . as if one were dealing with a publicity campaign."

He said it would "come to no Euro-

pean's mind" to have an intelligence service issue a manual "where it would be written 'copyright Central Intelligence Agency'."

He said, "There is a tremendous temptation over here [in the United States] to confuse levels of intervention. You cannot use a secret service as a substitute for the military."

He cited as an example "asking a secret service to do large-scale naval blockading."

Mr. Heisbourg said France "did not get into a huff and a puff" when it feared certain African countries might fall into the Soviet embrace a decade ago. "We did not go public about it. We worked at several levels."

He said the French experience in Africa showed that "you have at your disposal an array of means of action, positive or negative . . . which in effect enable you to have an influence on the course of destiny . . . short of blatant military intervention."

But, he added, the French don't have a recipe for the United States in Central America.

Asked what the United States should do, he said support for the resistance forces is "precisely the sort of thing which intelligence agencies . . . do."

He said that if France had been making policy during the early days

of the Sandinista revolution, it might have created a special fund and channeled it through Mexico, offering several thousand Mexican teachers to Nicaragua.

"It would have been a litmus test [of Nicaraguan intentions]," he said. "This sort of indirect action is the sort of action which apparently the United States doesn't know how to play."

Mr. Heisbourg warned that the United States should not give the appearance of having an American version of the Brezhnev doctrine — "that you have the right to impose on another country a social and political system because you consider

that it is better than any other."

He also criticized the Reagan administration for not clearly enough drawing the line in Nicaragua against outside influence. Although the United States drew the line at advanced jet aircraft or Soviet military bases, he noted, highly advanced Mi-24 "Hind" helicopters slipped in.

"You would have been better off if the line had not been designated only in hardware terms but also in . . . software terms [such as technicians and pilots]," he said.

"Whenever you give [the Soviets] a chance to circumvent or to find a loophole . . . they'll use it," he said.